

# Japanese, U.S. Navies Tackle Anti-Sub Warfare Drill

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Japanese and U.S. Navy forces teamed up Wednesday on a large-scale bilateral training exercise focused on improving the island country's defenses.

The exercise, called ANNUALEX17G, will run through Nov. 18 in the sea and airspace around Japan.

An estimated 8,500 U.S. Navy personnel will work in concert with those manning the participating 80 ships and 170 aircraft of the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF).

This year's focus is on anti-submarine warfare, according to a joint news release.

"Anti-submarine warfare is vitally important right now," said 7th Fleet spokesman Chief Petty Officer Rick Chernitzer.

More than 250 submarines in the Pacific are within reach of critical choke points and navigational sea lanes, the news release stated.

A JMSDF Staff Office spokeswoman confirmed that anti-submarine warfare presently is a high priority but declined to discuss specifics.

The Japanese defense exercise began in 1954; it has been held bilaterally since 1981, a JMSDF staff office news release stated.

Most years, ANNUALEX involves personnel exchanges between Japanese and U.S. forces.

"It's pretty standard to have officers and enlisted people spend a few days on each others' ships," Chernitzer said. "It's not only a cultural exchange. It's a good way to see how that country operates in case we work together in the future."

Participating at sea will be the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk; guided-missile cruisers USS Chancellorsville and USS Cowpens; guided-missile destroyers USS John S. McCain, USS Curtis Wilbur, USS Stethem, USS Lassen and USS Fitzgerald; and frigates USS Vandegrift and USS Gary.

Two Pearl Harbor-based attack submarines—USS Pasadena and USS Santa Fe—made the trip from Hawaii. Military Sealift Command has three ships in the exercise: fleet oiler USNS Walter S. Diehl, fleet ammunition ship USNS Flint and survey ship USNS Victorious.

Taking part as well are the Kitty Hawk's airwing and maritime patrol aircraft under the control of Commander, Task Force 72.

Rear Admiral Douglas McClain, Strike Force 7th Fleet commander, will command all U.S. naval forces. Vice Adm. Eiichi Nakashima, Self Defense Fleet commander, will command the JMSDF.